



Department of Justice

United States Attorney David R. Dugas
Middle District of Louisiana

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
FRIDAY, JULY 21, 2006
WWW.USDOJ.GOV/USAO/LAM

CONTACT: DAVID R. DUGAS
(225) 389-0443
FAX: (225) 389-0561

**THREE MORE INDICTED IN BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA,
ON FRAUD CHARGES RELATED TO HURRICANE DISASTER RELIEF PROGRAMS**

BATON ROUGE, LA – United States Attorney David R. Dugas announced that a federal grand jury returned indictments yesterday against three more Louisiana residents on fraud charges related to hurricane disaster relief programs.

GENEVA MARIA WAGNER, age 31, of Metairie, Louisiana, was charged in a one-count indictment with wire fraud in obtaining disaster unemployment benefits for alleged losses resulting from Hurricane Katrina. WAGNER is charged with defrauding the Louisiana Department of Labor (LDOL) and the Federal Emergency Management Administration (FEMA) by applying for benefits under the Unemployment Insurance program (UI) from on or about September 6, 2005, to on or about May 10, 2006, while allegedly failing to notify LDOL of her continuous employment after the storm. These funds were intended for persons who had become unemployed as a result of the disaster. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. If convicted, WAGNER faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine, or both.

STEVEN F. ANDREWS, age 41, of Metairie, Louisiana, was charged in a two-count indictment with mail and wire fraud. ANDREWS was charged in Count One of the indictment with falsely claiming unemployment benefits under LDOL's Unemployment Insurance program from July 1, 2004, through January 2005. ANDREWS was allegedly employed throughout the period of the fraud. ANDREWS was charged in Count Two of the indictment with fraudulently claiming unemployment benefits from October 2, 2005, through March 2006, failing to notify LDOL of his employment during this time period. ANDREWS received these benefits under the "auto-pay" period of LDOL's Unemployment Insurance program, which was in effect after Hurricane Katrina, effectively suspending certain requirements for filing for UI, including the requirement to verify employment status for those claimants who had become unemployed as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General. If convicted, ANDREWS faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine, or both.

FRED DANIEL MILLER, age 39, of Conway, Arkansas, was charged in a one-count indictment with wire fraud, allegedly claiming his employment was interrupted as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The indictment states the MILLER was incarcerated at Orleans Parish Prison before Hurricane Katrina struck the state in August 2005. He was evacuated to Hunt Correctional Center and then to West Carroll Detention Center before being released on September 30, 2005. MILLER filed for benefits under the Disaster Unemployment Assistance

program, which is funded by FEMA to provide financial assistance to individuals whose employment had been lost or interrupted as a direct result of a major disaster. According to the indictment, MILLER filed for DUA benefits on or about October 14, 2005, falsely claiming to have been self employed from April 1, 2005, through August 27, 2005, and that his employment was interrupted as a result of Hurricane Katrina. The charges resulted from an investigation conducted by the U.S. Department of Labor, Office of Inspector General; and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. If convicted, ANDREWS faces a maximum sentence of twenty years imprisonment and a \$250,000 fine, or both, for each count.

These individuals bring to sixty-four the total number of defendants who have been charged in the Middle District of Louisiana with violations related to Hurricane Katrina relief funds.

In September 2005, Attorney General Alberto R. Gonzales created the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, designed to deter, investigate and prosecute disaster-related federal crimes such as charity fraud, identity theft, procurement fraud and insurance fraud. The Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force – chaired by Assistant Attorney General Alice S. Fisher of the Criminal Division – includes members from the FBI, the Federal Trade Commission, the Postal Inspector’s Office, and the Executive Office for United States Attorneys, among others.

For further information, contact David R. Dugas, U.S. Attorney for the Middle District of Louisiana, or Lyman Thornton, First Assistant U.S. Attorney, at (225) 389-0443. Anyone suspecting criminal activity involving disaster assistance programs can make an anonymous report by calling the toll-free Hurricane Relief Fraud Hotline, 1-866-720-5721, 24 hours a day, seven days a week, until further notice. Information can also be emailed to the Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force at HKFTF@leo.gov or sent by surface mail, with as many details as possible, to Hurricane Katrina Fraud Task Force, Baton Rouge, LA 70821-4909.

NOTE: An indictment is a determination by a grand jury that there is probable cause to believe that offenses have been committed by the defendant. The defendant, of course, is presumed innocent until and unless she is proven guilty at trial.

###